

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ADP-00 IO-03 NSC-10 NSCE-00 INR-10

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P R 232300Z JUL 73

FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

TO SECSTATE WASMHC PRIORITY 4828

DIA WASHDC PRIORITY

INFO AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

USCINCSO

S E C R E T TEGUCIGALPA 2715

LIMDIS

USCINCSO ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR PBOR ES HO

SUBJ: HONDURAS/SALVADOR BORDER INCIDENTS

REF: (A) MANAGUA 3152; (B) SAN SALVADOR 2792

1. IN CONVERSATION WITH AMBASSADOR AND COMUSMILGP JULY 20, GENERAL LOPEZ EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER RECENT SHOOTING INCIDENTS ON BORDER, IN WHICH PLATOON OF ARMED MEN IN HONDURAN UNIFORMS HAD SKIRMISHED WITH HONDURAN TROOPS. HE SAID HE HAD BEEN ATTEMPTING INVESTIGATE BOTH BY USUAL BILATERAL CONTACTS BETWEEN MILITARY COMMANDERS IN BORDER ZONE AND THROUGH OTHER UNSPECIFIED CHANNELS, AND THAT SALVADORANS REPORTED HAVING ENCOUNTERED SIMILAR-SIZED BAND DRESSED IN HONDURAN UNIFORMS. SO FAR, SAID LOPEZ, IT HAS NOT BEEN POSSIBLE TO IDENTIFY GROUP OR GROUPS INVOLVED AND IT WAS NOT YET CLEAR WHETHER THESE MIGHT BE SALVADORANS OR HONDURANS, OR MIXTURE OF BOTH, TRYING

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TO STIR UP TROUBLE BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. (LOPEZ

SEEMED TO IMPLY ACCEPTANCE FOR THE MOMENT THAT INCIDENTS DID NOT REFLECT DELIBERATE GOES PROVOCATIONS AND, DESPITE FACT THAT HONDURAN ARMY SOME MONTHS AGO ROUNDED UP COMMON BANDITS USING ASSORTED HAF UNIFORMS, HE DID NOT SUGGEST SIMILAR RUN-OF-MILL CRIMINAL OPERATION AS POSSIBILITY.) THE GENERAL CONCLUDED THAT THE SITUATION WAS BEING WATCHED CAREFULLY "BY BOTH SIDES."

2. IN TALK WITH DCM ALSO ON JULY 20, MINFINANCE ACOSTA BONILLA REPEATED GOH CONCERN OVER RECENT BORDER INCURSIONS AND CONFIRMED THAT THE MOTIVATION AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE INCIDENTS HAD NOT YET BEEN DETERMINED. HE ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT HONDURANS WERE CERTAIN SOME INTERNAL UNREST WAS OCCURRING IN EL SALVADOR, ALTHOUGH THEY WERE NOT SURE OF ITS NATURE OR EXTENT.

3. IN ARTICLE FRONT-PAGED JULY 23, SALVADOR-BAITING EL CRONISTA REPORTED SALVADORAN MUSTANGS HAD VIOLATED HONDURAN AIRSPACE OVER GULF OF FONSECA LATE LAST WEEK AND THAT TRAVELERS RETURNING TO OTHER CA CAPITALS FROM SAN SALVADOR WERE REPORTING LARGE SALVADORAN TROOP MOVEMENTS TOWARDS BORDER AREAS. THESE REPORTS PRESUMABLY WERE INSPIRED BY ACAJUTLA MANEUVERS MENTIONED REFTEL (B), BUT CRONISTA CHARACTERISTICALLY ELABORATED UPON THE POSSIBILITY OF AN IMMINENT INCURSION VIA MARCALA TO COMAYAGUA TO "CUT COUNTRY IN HALF."

4. COMMENT: WILD STORIES A LA CRONISTA, PLUS FRAGMENTS OF "OFFICIAL" REPORTS OF INCIDENTS WHICH LEAK OUT INESCAPABLY IN THIS SMALL AND CLOSELY INTERRELATED SOCIETY WILL KEEP THE PUBLIC RUMOR MILL GOING FOR A WHILE YET. RUMORS APART, THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT THAT SOBER AND RESPONSIBLE GOH OFFICIALS, CIVILIAN AND MILITARY, ARE GENUINELY PUZZLED AND SOMEWHAT WORRIED ABOUT WHAT THEY CONSIDER DETERIORATING CONDITIONS IN THE BORDER AREA. STILL, IT IS ENCOURAGING THAT THEY SEEM TO BE APPROACHING THE SITUATION WITH CARE, TRYING TO KEEP COMMUNICATIONS OPEN AND, ON THE WHOLE, AVOIDING ANY PUBLIC EXPRESSIONS OF CONCERN THAT MIGHT GENERATE MORE TENSIONS. 4. ABOVE REFLECTS JOINT EFFORT AND COMMENTS EMB/DAO AND MILGRP.

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